

Excerpt 2 from
Notes from Hotel Misterioso

Miles does have a nice library. It's more eclectic than your standard hotel left-behinds. I just read that furniture made of rattan is good in climates like Mexico's because it's porous. It breathes. It's the kind of information that is nothing less than abstract in its practicality. You want to slap your forehead, "Of course!"

I'm reading *A Watched Pot Does Boil*. It's by a Japanese gangster turned Zen philosopher named Gangi Ono. The title is a reference to Ono's own moment of satori during a Japanese tea ceremony. There to assassinate some businessman in debt to the mob, Ono describes the interminable wait for the water to boil. In an effort to distract his mind, he invokes the old saying, "a watched pot doesn't boil." When, after several minutes, ("centuries") the water boils, Ono realizes that he has told himself other "lies." Satori is not far behind. Ono writes about the teaching style and philosophy of

his own master, Kikikoto.

“Stop talking about being centered!” the master is always yelling at his pupils. “Where is the center of nothing? Up and down, back and forth, in relation to what?”

Kikikoto was in his eighties when Ono began studying with him. The master always carried a bamboo shaft, which he used freely on the heads of the monks.

“Horse in a square corral,” Kikikoto says to his pupils. “Is best way for horse to jump over corral or wait for gate to open?”

“The best way for the horse,” a pupil says, “is for the horse not to see the corral.”

Kiki smacks the pupil with his shaft, “Horse not blind! Corral there!”

Another pupil steps forward. “Master,” he says, “the best way for the horse is to become *one* with the corral.”

Down comes the shaft.

“Easier for shaft to become one with head than corral with horse,” Kiki yells.

“Master,” another pupil says, “the best way for the horse is not to ask which is the best way to get out of the corral.”

Smack! “Horse not bureaucrat!”

Another student steps forward and bows down. “Master,” the student says, “please, *you* tell us which is best. Should the horse jump over the corral or wait for the gate to open?”

The master smacks him. “I look like horse to you?” he bellows and goes off to afternoon tea.

In discussing the path of the spiritual outsider,

Kikikoto says, “Stare down your *fear*, then stare down your *guilt* and then stare down your *boredom*.”

Stare down your fear that there is no *design*, no *plan* and no *salvation*. Stare down the guilt that society heaps on you when “you learn to go on without pre-conception, without sentimentality, without psychology, and finally, without content.”

You’re breathing the rare air here so be prepared to live without friends or recognition or any ideological crutch at all. To combat the inevitable stasis that such un-tethered thought can lead to, one must then stare down a deep, seemingly irresolvable boredom—escape from which can only come through action of some type. But action is not an option because all action (even the action of saving or taking one’s life) is meaningless and a stupid waste of time.

Stupid or not, Ono managed to kill himself following his release from the hospital where he was being treated for “exhaustion.” This according to the biographical notes in the second edition of, *A Watched Pot Does Boil*. His method was as unorthodox as his transition from Yakuza thug to Buddhist monk. Ono had a helicopter take him to the roof of the Broyhill Building in Chicago where he leapt a hundred and thirty-six floors to his death. His suicide note, printed on two thousand gold-embossed business cards that he hurled over the building’s edge as he jumped, read: “*You don’t honor freedom by worshipping rules.*” Gangi Ono.

Last night we all wandered into Boca Mente for

a fireworks display and the first night of fiesta. I think Miles feels the need to entertain us. He is obviously taken with Elle. He's always liked my girlfriends.

An addiction to simplicity is at the base of our delight in fireworks. We are easily charmed by the benign violence of these controlled explosions because we are not intimidated by an incomprehensible cause and effect. There is nothing to understand, no message in the colorful bursting rockets. But I think an appreciation of the sublime in this type of mentality—if it exists at all—is seldom theoretical. There is little interest in creative sources, but a lot of interest in the ultimate impact. It's a mentality that senses there are billions of unheard whispers, but only so many loud unmistakable bangs. While one has little chance to put together a meaningful experience overhearing a lot of disconnected intimacy, one can most certainly gather momentum based on a loud, colorful, explosion.